

SUPERFUND

Fact Sheet

TALACHE TAILINGS MINE SITE

Atlanta, Idaho



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION 10

March 2000

Talache Tailings Piles

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) performed investigations, human health and ecological risk evaluations and an analysis of cleanup alternatives for the tailings piles at the Talache Tailings Mine site. EPA's preferred cleanup alternative for the tailings piles was put out for public comment from May 17 to June 16, 1999. After the public comment period, EPA responded to the comments received in a responsiveness summary and selected the cleanup alternative for the tailings piles.

The selected alternative is to stabilize the exterior slopes of the tailings piles, regrade the tailings piles, place a soil cover and revegetate, and create diversion ditches to control water running onto and off the piles. If determined necessary from investigations, a contingency plan for treating springs and seeps coming from the base of the piles will also be established. EPA had planned to start construction on the tailings piles during the 1999 construction season. However, delays were encountered and construction will begin in June 2000 and be completed by the end of the year.

Since the release in 1997, several measures have been taken to stabilize the tailings piles until a final solution is constructed. These measures include construction of sediment ponds, surface water diversion structures, and grading of the piles. In addition, tailings in the depositional area, the area where the tailings now reside, that were highly prone to erosion to surface water have been removed and brought to the tailings piles.

Background

The Talache Tailings Mine Site is located near Atlanta, Idaho. Tailings were released from the Talache and St. Joe Tailings Piles on May 15, 1997 when water on top of the piles broke through the tailings, releasing them into the valley below. Tailings were released into upland meadows, a wetland, Montezuma and Unnamed Creeks and the Middle Fork of the Boise River. The area where the tailings now reside is known as the depositional area and is approximately 60 acres. The tailings piles and the release in the depositional area are on both private property and property owned by the United States Forest Service. Arsenic is the most significant contaminant of concern of several metals present in the tailings.

Depositional Area

Investigations were performed in the depositional area to characterize the tailings and soils in the wetland and upland areas, surface water, sediments and groundwater. A human health and ecological risk assessment is also being performed in this area. If potential risks are shown then cleanup alternatives will be evaluated in an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA). This document will include an evaluation of all the alternatives EPA looked at as final remedies. EPA's preferred alternative as well as the other alternatives evaluated will be put out for public comment. If time permits, the cleanup action will take place in 2000.

For More Information - Information Repositories

Copies of the EE/CA report and other reports that support the cleanup of the Tailings Piles are available at the following locations. Documents that support the cleanup decision at the Depositional Area will also be available at the following locations when they are finalized in the spring/summer of 2000.

Atlanta Post Office
Atlanta, Idaho

U. S. EPA
Idaho Operations Office
1435 N. Orchard
Boise, ID

U. S. EPA
1200 Sixth Avenue
Records Center
Seattle, WA

Questions - If you have any questions please contact:

Fran Allans, EPA Project Manager
(208) 378-5775

Jeanne O'Dell, Community Involvement Coordinator
(206) 553-6919 or toll free at
1-800-424-4372.

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with speech or hearing disabilities by contacting one of the numbers listed above.



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